

## 2.0 Regional Profile

### Location

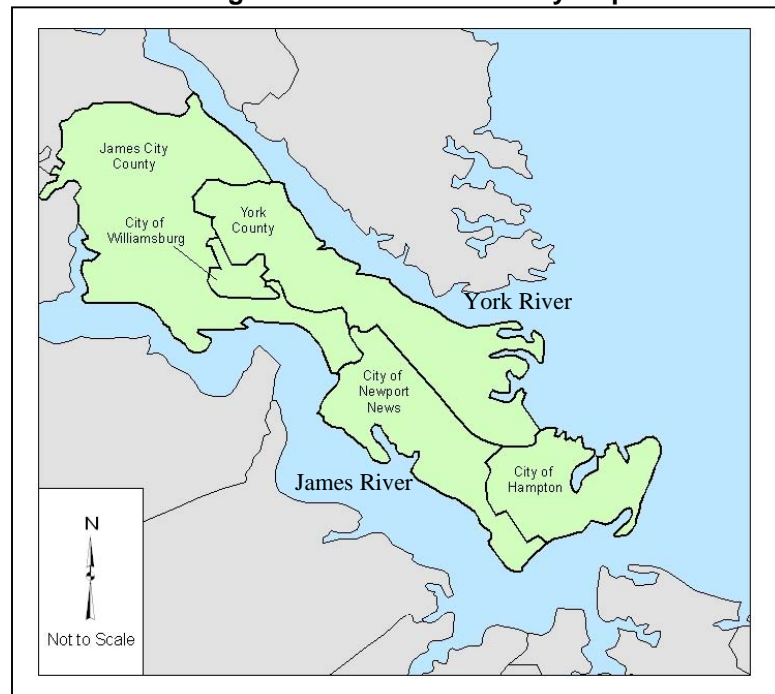
The lower Virginia Peninsula in southeast Virginia is bounded by the York River, James River, and Chesapeake Bay. The region encompasses the independent cities of Hampton, Newport News and Williamsburg, and includes James City County and York County. The region has extensive natural areas, including the Chesapeake Bay, picturesque rivers, state parks, wildlife refuges, and botanical gardens.

This Peninsula is rich in colonial American history. The first permanent English settlement in North America was established in 1607 at Jamestown, in James City County. Virginia's first capital was in Williamsburg and much of the historic district of that city has been restored. Also, the decisive battle of the American Revolution, the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, took place on the Virginia Peninsula. In 1862 during the American Civil War, the Union Army invaded the Peninsula as part of the campaign to capture Richmond. The 1862 Battle of Yorktown took place along the York River.

The Peninsula jurisdictions are part of the Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News, Virginia, North Carolina Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The Virginia portion of this MSA is generally termed Hampton Roads. The land portion of Hampton Roads is divided into two regions: the Peninsula, on the north, and South Hampton Roads, on the south side, where the majority of the area's population resides.

Hampton Roads is an important area of water-based commerce, especially for the cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Newport News. The Norfolk Naval Shipyard is located in Portsmouth a few miles up the Elizabeth River. Northrup Grumman Shipyard is located near the mouth of the James River in Newport News. There are also several smaller shipyards, numerous docks and terminals. Massive coal loading piers and facilities were established in the late 19th and early 20th century by the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O), Norfolk & Western, and Virginian Railways at the end of the Peninsula in Newport News. CSX Transportation now serves the former C&O facility at Newport News.

**Figure 2.0-Peninsula Vicinity Map**





## Population Growth and Development Trends

Bordered by the York River to the north, James River to the south, Hampton Roads, and the Chesapeake Bay to the east, the Lower Virginia Peninsula is home to more than 450,000 people. (Weldon Cooper 2005) Future population projections indicate that the area will have more than 540,000 residents by 2030. (Virginia Employment Commission, 2005)

The Peninsula region has been one of Virginia's fastest growing regions in recent years. Between the 1990 and 2000 Census, the population of the region grew by 12.8 percent (see Table 2a). Population projections since the 2000 Census, completed by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia, show that the region as a whole continues to grow but at a less rapid pace.

**Table 2a-Regional Population Statistics**

Jurisdiction	Census Data		% change 1990 – 2000	Weldon- Cooper 2004 estimate <sup>1</sup>	% change 2000 to 2004	2030 Population Projection <sup>2</sup>
	1990	2000				
City of Hampton	133,793	146,437	9.5%	142,800	-2.48%	155,600
City of Newport News	170,045	180,150	5.9%	182,400	1.25%	190,100
City of Williamsburg	11,530	11,998	4.1%	13,600	13.35%	13,900
James City County	34,859	48,102	38.0%	55,200	14.76%	92,000
York County	42,434	56,297	32.6%	61,500	9.24%	91,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>392,649</b>	<b>442,984</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>455,500</b>	<b>2.83%</b>	<b>542,600</b>

<sup>1</sup> Weldon Cooper Center, UVA 2005

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Employment Commission, Electronic Labor Market Access, 2005

In addition to population projections, the Weldon Cooper Center also summarizes building permits by community to provide a picture of residential construction activity by year. Building permits are categorized by type of building (single-family, 2-4 unit structures, and 5+ unit structures) and by builder-estimated value of construction. For multi-unit structures, the data indicate the number of units permitted rather than the number of buildings. The information excludes permits issued for mobile homes, garages and other out-buildings, additions and renovations, and commercial construction. These data provide insight to the amount of construction occurring in each of the team jurisdictions (see Table 2b).

**Table 2b -2004 Annual Building Permit Data**

Jurisdiction	Single Family Units		Structures with 2-4 Units		Structures with 5+ Units		Total Units	
	Number	Cost	Number	Cost	Number	Cost	Number	Cost
Hampton	321	\$36,853,379	0	\$0	0	\$0	321	\$36,853,379
Newport News	280	\$33,347,101	0	\$0	463	\$26,793,361	743	\$60,140,462
Williamsburg	93	\$11,077,085	16	\$1,090,400	0	\$0	109	\$12,167,485
James City	1,111	\$239,382,070	0	\$0	0	\$0	1,111	\$239,382,070
York	438	\$73,474,329	36	\$2,202,000	0	\$0	474	\$75,676,329
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,243</b>	<b>\$394,133,964</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>\$3,292,400</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>\$26,793,361</b>	<b>2,758</b>	<b>\$424,219,725</b>



## 2.1 History of the Peninsula Region

### **City of Hampton, Virginia**

Hampton is the oldest continuously settled English-speaking community in the United States. The area now occupied by Hampton was first noted by English colonists before they sailed up the James River to settle in Jamestown, where they visited an Indian village called Kecoughtan.

In 1610 the construction of Fort Henry and Fort Charles at the mouth of Hampton Creek marked the beginnings of Hampton. In 1619, the settlers chose an English name for the community, Elizabeth City. The settlement was known as Hampton as early as 1680, and in 1705 Hampton was recognized as a town. The City of Hampton was first incorporated in 1849. In 1952, Hampton, the independent town of Phoebus and Elizabeth City County, encompassing Buckroe and Fox Hill, were consolidated under one municipal government.

Benjamin Syms and Thomas Eaton founded the first free public schools in the United States in Hampton. Hampton is the site of Hampton University, established in 1868 to educate freed slaves. St. John's Episcopal parish was founded in 1610, making it the oldest in the country.

Fort Monroe, the only active moat-encircled fort in the country, dates from 1819. For a long period during the Civil War, the fort was the only Union outpost in the Confederacy. The famous battle between the first ironclad battleships, the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*, was fought just offshore in Hampton Roads, near the Hampton-Newport News municipal boundary.

During the Civil War, Hampton was burned down by its own troops rather than surrender to Federalist troops. Before the fire, Hampton had 30 businesses and over 100 homes. Fewer than six buildings remained intact after the fire. In 1884, fire again besieged Hampton and almost completely destroyed the downtown business district.

Hampton is now a thriving city with numerous industries including high-tech firms, seafood processing, NASA, military and tourism. Fort Monroe is currently headquarters for the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command but is facing closure and redevelopment as a result of the 2005 Base Realignment Closure Commission. Langley Air Force Base, where historic Langley field was constructed in 1917, is home of the First Fighter Wing. NASA Langley Research Center, where America's first astronauts were trained, is now a major center for aviation research.

### **City of Newport News, Virginia**

Established as a town in 1880, Newport News was incorporated as a city in 1896. In the 1960s, the City of Newport News merged with Warwick County to create today's incorporated area.

The most widely accepted version of how Newport News was named relates to Captain Christopher Newport's return to the area from England in 1610. Newport met the Jamestown colonists on Mulberry Island, (located offshore on the James River) as they were preparing to return to England. The news of his arrival with three vessels, a plentiful supply of provisions and 150 men, gave heart to the dispirited colonists who agreed to go back to Jamestown. In



gratitude, they named the point of landing "Newport's News." Over the years, the "s" was dropped, thus the name Newport News.

Newport News played a major role in the Peninsula Campaign during the Civil War. Numerous earthen fortifications and attractions that relate to the Civil War are still visible. Additionally, the famous Battle of the Ironclads took place off the shores of Newport News in 1862. Collis P. Huntington, a Northern railroad tycoon from Connecticut, established two major industries in Newport News: the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and Newport News Shipbuilding. Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, established in 1886, built many of the United States' aircraft carriers, including the *Enterprise*, *Kennedy*, *Washington*, *Vinson*, and *Roosevelt*. On Nov. 7, 2001, Newport News Shipbuilding signed a merger agreement with Northrop Grumman, and officially became Northrop Grumman Newport News.

The U.S. Army designated Newport News as a Port of Embarkation immediately after America's entry into World War I. The final major military base during WWI was Camp Eustis, which later became known as Fort Eustis. Named after the founder of Fort Monroe's Artillery School of Practice and a War of 1812 veteran, Brigadier General Abraham Eustis, the camp was created in 1918 to meet the need for an artillery firing range. Today, Fort Eustis is the home of the U.S. Army Transportation Corps, and the Transportation Corps Regiment. The U.S. Army Transportation Museum is also located at Fort Eustis.

### **City of Williamsburg, Virginia**

In 1699, the General Assembly of Virginia established the City of Williamsburg as the colony's capital. The new city, formerly known as Middle Plantation, was named in honor of King William III. In 1722, King George I granted a royal charter incorporating the City of Williamsburg after the fashion of the English municipal borough.

During the 1700's, Williamsburg developed into a bustling capital city and played a singularly historic role in events leading to American Independence. In 1780, the capital of Virginia moved to Richmond, and the Williamsburg area reverted to a quiet college town and rural county seat. In retrospect, Williamsburg's loss of capital city status was its salvation. Many eighteenth century buildings survived into the early twentieth century, when John D. Rockefeller Jr. supported a massive restoration effort. Now, the center of tourism and history, the area is preserved and managed by "Colonial Williamsburg", a non-profit foundation.

The College of William and Mary, located in Williamsburg, currently enrolls 5700 undergraduate and 2000 graduate students. Originally founded on February 8, 1693, William and Mary is the second-oldest institution of higher learning in the United States and the fourth oldest in North America. The school was one of the original Colonial colleges; the College's Wren Building is one of the oldest academic buildings in continuous use in the United States. The College educated several American leaders, including three U.S. Presidents. George Washington served as one of the College's first Chancellors.



William and Mary was occupied during the Civil War and closed from 1882-1888 due to financial strains (the College had invested in some Confederate bonds). In 1888, William and Mary reopened its doors and began to expand. Today, William and Mary is one of Virginia's most-cherished universities and was one of the first universities to become coeducational in 1918. William and Mary is consistently ranked among the premier public universities in America.

### **James City County, Virginia**

On May 13, 1607, 144 English explorers arrived and soon established James Towne as the administrative center or capitol. In 1634, by order of the King of England, Charles I, eight shires or counties with a total population of approximately 5,000 inhabitants were established in the colony of Virginia. James City Shire, as well as the James River and Jamestown took their name from King James I, the father of King Charles I. About 1642-43, the name of the James City Shire was changed to James City County. The original county included what is now Surry County across the James River, part of Charles City County and some of New Kent County.

Williamsburg became an independent city from James City County in 1884; however, the city is still the county seat of James City County, and they share a school system, courts, and some constitutional officers.

James City County encompasses land important in the early history of our nation. Three jurisdictions, James City County, York County, and the City of Williamsburg, work collaboratively on policies, programs, infrastructure and land use to preserve this historic area.

### **York County, Virginia**

York County, named for King Charles I, was formed in 1634 as Charles River Shire. It was one of the eight original shires in the Colony of Virginia. The county was renamed in 1642-43 as York County. The river, county, and town are believed to have been named for York, a city in Northern England. The first courthouse and jail were located near what is now Yorktown, although the port used for shipping tobacco to Europe was variously called Port of York, Borough of York, York, or Town of York, until Yorktown was established in 1691. Never incorporated as a town, Yorktown is the county seat of York County. The only town ever incorporated within the county's boundaries was Poquoson, which was incorporated in 1952 and became an independent city in 1975.

York County is most famous as the site of the surrender of General Cornwallis to General George Washington in 1781, ending the American Revolutionary War. Yorktown also figured prominently in the Civil War, serving as a major port to supply both northern and southern towns, depending upon who held Yorktown at the time.

Yorktown is part of an important national resource known as the Historic Triangle of Yorktown, Jamestown and Williamsburg, and is the northern terminus of the Colonial Parkway.



Peninsula Multi-Jurisdictional  
Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan  
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